



INSTITUTE  
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*and* LIBRARY  
SERVICES

# Field Native Reviewer American Handbook Enhancement Grants

For information, call  
IMLS: (202) 606-5227 or  
e-mail: [tbrown@imls.gov](mailto:tbrown@imls.gov)

# NATIVE AMERICAN LIBRARY SERVICES ENHANCEMENT GRANTS REVIEW PROCESS

Thank you for offering to serve as a Native American Library Services Enhancement Grants field reviewer. We have selected you to review this year's applications because of your expertise in one of the following areas:

- Knowledge of and familiarity with Native American communities and their library services/information needs;
- Education and training for library and information science;
- Technical knowledge regarding computers, electronic information management, software, Internet, etc.

Previous reviewers have reported the following benefits from serving as an Enhancement Grants reviewer:

- Increased knowledge about tribal libraries – their diversity and their needs;
- Exposure to innovations in the field of library and information science;
- Assistance with proposal writing and development;
- Awareness of the need for support of tribal libraries, and an increase in willingness to actively promote this need in communities;
- Professional development and recognition from peers.

The staff at IMLS has prepared this handbook specifically for field reviewers to ensure fair and candid review of all eligible applications. It will provide you with the procedural information you need. Please use it in tandem with this year's *Native American Library Services Grant Application and Guidelines*. Even if you are an experienced reviewer, you'll need to refresh your memory and note any changes.

## **Before reading the handbook, please do the following:**

- Read the Reviewer Checklist included in your review package.
- Mail the card to IMLS (attached to the checklist) verifying that you have received all of the materials.

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## **THE ENHANCE- MENT GRANTS PROGRAM**

The Enhancement Grants program provides Federal grants through an annual, competitive process. In this program:

- Applications are evaluated by peers in the field;
- Evaluations are based on the application's strength in proving that the applicant:
  - Meets applicable evaluation criteria as outlined in the *Guidelines*;
  - Demonstrates ability to successfully accomplish the proposed project;
  - Demonstrates sound financial planning and budgeting processes.

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**THE  
ENHANCE-  
MENT  
GRANTS  
PROCESS**

1. Applicants receive the *Native American Library Services Grant Application and Guidelines* and submit proposals to IMLS.
2. IMLS identifies a pool of qualified reviewers, issues invitations, and selects a cadre of field reviewers.
3. IMLS receives the grant applications, checks them for eligibility and completeness.
4. IMLS matches grant applications to field reviewers with appropriate expertise.
5. Reviewers review the applications and send their Comment and Scoring sheets to IMLS.
6. IMLS ranks the proposals based on field review scores.
7. IMLS Director makes final funding decisions.
8. IMLS staff notifies successful applicants of awards and provides feedback to applicants.
9. IMLS provides feedback to proposal reviewers.

## APPLICATION REVIEW INSTRUCTIONS

### I. First Steps

This section of the handbook contains detailed information on how to review an Enhancement Grant application. If you think that you may not be able to review every proposal you have received, do not begin the review process. Instead contact IMLS at once and notify the staff.

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#### QUALITIES OF A GOOD PROPOSAL

A good Enhancement Grant proposal should:

- Contain all requested items and documentation
- Describe a worthwhile project idea which will increase or improve services to Native Americans
- Successfully address each evaluation criterion
- Demonstrate sound financial and budget planning
- Potentially serve as a model project for other tribal libraries

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#### TIME REQUIRED

Experienced reviewers report that it takes two to three hours to evaluate a proposal. If you are a first time Enhancement Grants reviewer, you may need more time. We recommend the reviewing process outlined on the following pages.

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#### CHECK SHIPPING BOX

If you haven't already done so, refer to the contents listed on the Reviewer Checklist. Contact IMLS immediately if any of the items listed are missing.

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#### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Read the "Conflict of Interest" statement carefully. Then read through your list of applications to see if there are any potential conflicts of interests. If there are not, read and sign the Conflict of Interest statement. You will send this form to IMLS with your completed review forms. If there is a potential conflict, contact IMLS immediately. Once you have reviewed an application, you should *never* represent the applicant in dealings with the IMLS or other Federal agencies in regard to this grant application or award.

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#### CONFIDENTIALITY

The information contained in grant applications is strictly confidential. Do not discuss or reveal names, institutions, project activities or any other information contained in the applications. Contact IMLS if you have any questions concerning an application – do not contact an applicant directly.

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#### APPLICATION COMPLETENESS

Check your applications to make sure that all required information is included. We check the original application only. We do not check every page of each reviewer copy for completeness. ***If any application appears to be incomplete, contact IMLS immediately.***

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#### SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

The chart on the following page presents a week-by-week guide to completing the review process. You may want to use this chart as a model for your own schedule.

## FOUR-WEEK SCHEDULE OF COMPLETION

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4
ACTIVITY 1	<b>1) Check</b> box for all materials. ♦ Check each application for completeness. ♦ Contact IMLS with any problems. ♦ Read and sign the Conflict of Interest statement			
ACTIVITY 2	<b>2) Read</b> the <i>Reviewer Checklist</i> , <i>Reviewer Handbook</i> and the <i>Grant Application and Guidelines</i> .			
ACTIVITY 3	<b>3) Evaluate</b> applications: 1st read to understand range of responses.			
ACTIVITY 4	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: space-between;"> <span>←</span> <b>4) 2<sup>nd</sup> read-through-write</b> comments and assign scores           <span>→</span> </div>			
ACTIVITY 5	<b>5) Review</b> comments and scores; adjust as necessary			
ACTIVITY 6	<b>6) Return</b> Comment and Scoring sheets			
ACTIVITY 7	<b>7) Return</b> signed Conflict of Interest statement			
ACTIVITY 8	<b>8) Complete</b> and return Reviewer Questionnaire			
ACTIVITY 9	<b>9) Keep</b> application & review sheets until October 1 and then destroy			

## II. Evaluating Applications

IMLS asks you to express your professional judgment of each proposal in the following three ways: (1) Assess if the proposal addresses the priorities of the Enhancement Grants program (see **Purpose of Program** in the *Grant Application and Guidelines*); (2) Write comments for each evaluation criterion; and (3) Assign a numerical score to each criterion, and a total score for the proposal.

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### READ AND POST EVALUATION CRITERIA

Read the Enhancement Grants Evaluation Criteria handout, which lists the criteria that the proposals are expected to address. Place this handout in your workplace where you can easily refer to it throughout the review process. Read the *Grant Application and Guidelines*, which provides more information about the evaluation criteria and describes the guidelines of the Enhancement Grants program. Your understanding of these criteria is an essential factor in a successful review.

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### READ APPLICATIONS

Read your applications to develop a feel for the range of responses. Take notes as you read. Read each application again, and clarify your thoughts for the scoring process.

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### WRITE COMMENTS

Insert the diskette into your computer and access the Comment and Scoring sheet or duplicate paper copies as needed. If possible, type comments on a computer. If you don't have computer access, type or use a black ink pen. **DO NOT** use pencil or blue ink.

Reread the Evaluation Criteria on the handout. Draft a comment that reflects your judgment for each of the evaluation criteria.

Write your comments in the space after "Comments" underneath the score line for each criterion. Use your professional knowledge and experience to make objective assessments. Include page citations from the proposal to justify your comments.

Remember, your comments will be used not only by the IMLS staff, but also as feedback to the applicants. Structure your comments to be factual and educational. Especially in the Additional Comments section, write suggestions that are informative and improvement-oriented. In this way, the application process becomes a learning activity for each applicant.

The bottom-line is: Would this feedback help you to improve your application next time?

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**SAMPLE  
COMMENTS**

The next few pages contain sample comments from field reviews. Those comments labeled as “effective” comments, based on evidence provided in the application, are substantive, tactful, and helpful to the evaluation. Remember that these are samples only. Feel free to use the effective ones as models when preparing your own but DO NOT copy or paraphrase our samples. Each application is unique and deserves its own unique comments.

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**EFFECTIVE  
COMMENTS**

Some of the characteristics of an effective comment:

- Presented in a constructive manner (descriptive, not judgmental)
- Concise, specific, easy to read and understand
- Specific to the individual applicant
- Reflect the professionalism of the reviewer
- Correlate with the score that is given
- Acknowledge the resources of the institution
- Reflect the application’s strengths and identify areas for improvement

Remember: Successful and unsuccessful applicants use your comments to improve their future applications!

Each of the sample comments listed below is followed by an explanation of its effective characteristics.

**Statement of Need:** *“The application includes a strong discussion of the need for and practical utility of information services in the surrounding region; project has a clear focus on short and long term benefits. Applicant describes who and how many will be served by the project.”* (Demonstrates how proposal will improve services and impact on the community)

**Project Design:** *“Strategy is imaginative and well planned to serve local needs. Action steps are specific and well-sequenced. Development of a library web page is not included (which seems to be needed for this project).”* (Indicates applicant has developed clear goals and action steps to implement project, suggests area for improvement)

*“In many respects, this grant attempts to do too much and so it seems to lack focus. The design section says monies will be used to acquire primary source materials to fill the gaps in their collections and to develop six special library programs aimed at enhancing members’ understanding of their history. But then they indicate money will be spent to install social service and educational program literature and electronic forms so that participants can begin the ‘paperwork process’ on four tribal programs ranging from substance abuse to youth employment. Although they are using a great deal of technology, they also seem to be buying a wooden card catalog and one has to ask why? They are also taking field trips to libraries to familiarize project staff with the history of public libraries – why is this necessary when they are hiring a librarian who should have some kind of background?”* (Provides big picture analysis, uses critical thinking, presented in constructive manner)

*“The proposed project is based upon efficient, effective and successful approaches that will enable the grantee to accomplish clear goals and objectives. The project as proposed will result in an effective systemic change within the organization and will allow for continued services to be provided after the period of Federal funding. While there are goals and objectives and timelines for completion of the project, there is no evaluation established to document implementation and outcomes. However, the results of the proposal will result in observable outcomes that will validate the project.”* (Provides analysis and describes impact, suggests improvement area)

**Management Plan:** *“The project details the benchmarks and timeframes for the completion of each of the tasks as well as the personnel responsible for monitoring and oversight. Project director has experience and management skills commensurate to this task”* (Specific to key evaluation criteria, evaluative; assessment of abilities)

**Personnel:** *“The director, evaluator, and computer specialist are all well trained and experienced both in their professional fields, and in working with native communities.”* (Provides specific and evaluative information)

*“Proposal is not clear about the qualifications they are seeking for the project director and librarian. Therefore, attached resumes cannot be assessed as to whether these 2 individuals qualify for those positions. In light of the monies required to pay for the 2 salaries, suggest they develop clear requirements and job descriptions before hiring and committing funds.”* (Specific evaluative comments plus suggestion for improvement)

*“It appears that the purpose is to hire a librarian to train the archivist in library skills. One would wonder why the archivist doesn’t avail herself of the library and information science program at the University (located nearby) if that is the goal here.”* (Concise, specific, reflects resource knowledge of reviewer, identifies improvement idea)

**Evaluation:** *“They are going to keep count of the number of times the service is used by patrons. This is a straightforward method of evaluating the service usage. The evaluation might have been improved (slightly) if they had tried to ascertain patron satisfaction with the service.”* (Substantive; improvement idea)

**Model Project:** *“This project provides a means by which libraries can move beyond only providing access to digitized collections. This project can provide a model that supports the incorporation of artifacts and library information sources utilizing multi-media for undergraduate courses. The Web site, with the images, library resources, and additional pieces to be added by students enrolled in the credit courses, should serve as a model for demonstrating how classes can be improved and collections enriched via application of the Internet.* (Provides explanation of how this project serves as a model)

*“Proposal will expand library service to 5,000 residents by upgrading current system to web-based service. Web page will link library catalog and in-house databases. Project demonstrates outstanding understanding of current library practices coupled with a plan to enhance library service for constituents. Applicant outlines extensive methods for documenting and disseminating information on project throughout the state.”* (Summarizes use of technology, impact on customers, and methods for sharing information with other libraries)

**Budget:**

**Appropriateness**

*“The total cost for the equipment seems reasonable. The travel costs seem out of line. The project director is going to oversee the operation of only one year of a two year project. I do not understand how they computed their in-direct costs -- they use \$x as the base amount because they excluded the equipment and then gave back part of the in-direct as an in-kind match.”* (Analytical and specific to individual applicant)

**Cost effective**

*“Straightforward. They buy the access, they make the service available and the librarian no longer has to go to the public library to search for materials for her patrons. This is extremely cost effective. I just wish they had asked for additional funds for reference materials and back files of journals for their library.”* (Informative, offers suggestion for improvement)

**Technical Knowledge:** *“Supporting documents (resumes, long-range technology plan) are evidence of a prior commitment to use of emerging technology by this tribe. Proposal shows expertise and experience in implementing technology into their activities.”* (References portion of the proposal, provides assessment)

*“While the proposed projects will result in the grantee employing promising, innovative or appropriate methods or techniques of emerging technology, they do not speak to a commitment to the sharing of the technical knowledge gained in the conduct of the project other than through a Web Page. It should be expected the grantee would do more in this area. The person who will head this project is very experienced and knowledgeable in this field and will be able to bring the project to a successful conclusion.”* (Presented in constructive manner, acknowledges resources of the institution)

**Additional Comments:** *“A well written and documented proposal; my only major concern is the budget request. If funded, I suggest serious revisions in the amount of money granted. For example, eliminate ...”* (Big picture assessment, identified area for improvement)

*“Addresses an area of critical concern for tribal libraries, but two major barriers exist: not enough planning is in evidence in the evaluation, and more evidence of institution support is required – their commitment is not sufficiently documented in this application. For instance, an in-kind commitment is not included.”*  
(Affirms validity of proposal, points out blind spots with specific example)

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## **LESS EFFECTIVE COMMENTS**

Listed below are "less effective" comments. Comments that are considered less effective are vague, irrelevant, insensitive, or unclear. These comments actually hinder the evaluation process rather than help it.

To avoid making less effective comments, DO NOT:

- Penalize an applicant because you feel the institution doesn't need the money—remember any eligible institution may apply for and receive IMLS funds, regardless of need.
- Penalize an applicant because of missing materials, unless you have determined that the materials are missing from the original application. If you are missing *required* materials, contact IMLS immediately.
- Make derogatory remarks. (Offer suggestions for improvement rather than harsh criticism.)
- Question an applicant's honesty or integrity. You may question the accuracy of information provided by the applicant but if you are unsure how to raise your question, contact IMLS.
- Simply restate or reproduce the applicant's points from the narrative in your comments. (You may reference a portion of the narrative.)
- Offer or ask for irrelevant or extraneous information—your comments should concern only the information IMLS requests of applicants.

Each of the sample comments listed below is followed by an explanation of why it is a less effective comment.

*“The project is obviously attempting to make the work adaptable – good work.”*  
(Vague and unclear)

*“Weakest part of the proposal. Could be strengthened.”* (Vague, does not give suggestions for what and how to strengthen.)

*“I might question some parts of the budget, but they probably know what they're doing.”* (Not evaluative, vague, and irrelevant)

*“Addresses issues of digitization crucial to most cultural institutions.”* (Does not address how those issues impact on the proposed project—vague)

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## **BUDGET**

When evaluating this portion of the application keep in mind the appropriateness and cost efficiency of the budget to the purpose, objectives and activities of the project:

- Does the budget address all costs mentioned in the proposal?
- Are the various sections of the budget in relative proportion to each other?
- Can the budget be reasonably expected to carry out the proposed activities successfully?
- Is the approach taken the least expensive alternative available to the applicant?

After reviewing the budget narrative and tables, you may find the checklist below helpful in determining if the applicant has complied with the grant budget requirements.

### **The grant application budget must:**

Include three parts:

- Budget narrative
- Detailed budget table
- Summary budget table

Identify the following costs:

- Those supported by IMLS funds
- Applicant matching and cost sharing
- Sources and amounts of third-party matching and cost sharing, with any contributions noted as assured or pending
- Sources and amounts of costs supported by any other Federal agency [Note: other Federal funds may not count as cost sharing or matching; any in-kind contributions identified are to be related specifically to the grant project]

Attribute all costs to specific project activities.

Indicate whether a one or two-year grant is requested.

Demonstrate that:

- Expenses included in the organization's indirect costs are not charged to the project as direct costs.
- No more than 20% of the funds requested from IMLS are used for indirect costs unless the applicant has a documented, current (in effect as of the beginning of the grant period) Federally-negotiated indirect cost rate.
- Funds are not allocated for construction, contributions to endowment funds, cost of social activities, ceremonies, entertainment, or pre-grant costs.
- The amount requested does not exceed \$150,000.00.
- The total amount of cost sharing must equal an amount that is at least 10% of the direct costs requested from IMLS.

### III. Assigning Scores

After you have written comments for each applicable criterion, you will assign a score. To help applicants understand and benefit from your reviews, make sure that your scores accurately reflect your written comments. If you have questions, contact IMLS.

- Read the Scoring Definitions below for a description for each of the five scores.
- Assign a score from 1 to 5 to each of the 7 proposal evaluation criteria. (Score Criterion 8 *only* if the applicant has included this section in the narrative.)
- Assign a score that correlates with your comment and is, in your judgment, appropriate.

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#### SCORING DEFINITIONS

<u>Score</u>	<u>Definition</u>
1	Does not meet this criterion
2	Partially meets this criterion
3	Meets this criterion
4	Exceeds this criterion
5	Exceeds this criterion and is a leadership model

#### Important

- Assign *whole numbers* only.
- *Do not* use fractions, decimals, zeros or more than one number in scoring individual criteria.

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#### COMPUTE FINAL SCORES

Make sure you have a score for each criterion. Add your scores and place the total on “Final Score” line. Check your figures carefully. *A Comment and Scoring sheet with missing comments and scores cannot be accepted.*

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#### PROJECTS RELATED TO TECHNOLOGY

*In addition to Criteria 1 through 7, some applications will be scored by one more criterion:*

8. Technical Knowledge

Place your raw score for this criterion in the space provided below the Final Score.

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#### PROVIDE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Space is provided at the end of the Comment and Scoring sheet for any additional comments that might help the applicant to improve the proposal for future submission or might help the applicant to carry out project goals in other ways. Remember, this page in particular will be used as feedback to the applicants.

## **IV. Mailing Review Sheets**

IMLS will need one signed copy and one unsigned copy of each of the applications you have reviewed. You will also need one copy (signed or unsigned) of each of the applications for your records.

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### **MAILING CHECKLIST**

1. Complete the Comment and Scoring sheet, and before signing make 2 copies.
2. Sign one copy and place the reviewer label in the box on the top of the signed Comment and Scoring sheet. (Labels are provided in the packet).
3. Do not sign the other copy
4. Keep the original Comment and Scoring sheet for each application for your records. These may be signed or unsigned.
5. Staple the pages of each copy together.
6. Group all of the signed copies in one stack in log number order. These will be used by IMLS.
7. Group all of the unsigned copies in another stack in log number order. These will be provided to applicants.
8. Complete the Reviewer Questionnaire with your comments about the review process. Your input will be an important factor in developing next year's review process.
9. If you have not previously done so, sign the Conflict of Interest statement.
10. Mail the following to IMLS in the enclosed return envelope by the date indicated in the IMLS Letter:
  - The signed copies of the Comment and Scoring sheet
  - The unsigned copies of the Comment and Scoring sheet
  - The word processing disk containing the Comment and Scoring sheet
  - The signed Conflict of Interest statement
  - The completed Reviewer Questionnaire

## **V. Final Step**

Keep your copies of the applications and your copies of the Comment and Scoring sheets you have reviewed on file until October 1 and then destroy them.

**THANK YOU FOR SERVING AS AN ENHANCEMENT GRANTS FIELD  
REVIEWER!**

# ENHANCEMENT GRANT APPLICATION

## COMMENT AND SCORING SHEET

**Place reviewer label here  
on signed copy only.**

**Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Log Number:** \_\_\_\_\_

### EVALUATION CHECKLIST

- For the description of each of the criteria, see the Evaluation Criteria handout or the *Guidelines*.
- In the space after “Comments” under the score line for each criterion, write a comment to express your professional judgment. Include page citations from the proposal to justify your comments where appropriate.
- Assign a score to Criteria 1-7 using the rating guide below. Use only whole numbers. Do not use zeros, fractions or decimals, or more than one number.
- Score Criterion 8 *only* if the applicant included a section on “Technical Knowledge” in the project application narrative.

### RATING GUIDE

1	2	3	4	5
Does not meet this criterion	Partially meets this criterion	Meets this criterion	Exceeds this criterion	Exceeds this criterion and is a leadership model

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Criterion 1. Statement of Need

Score: \_\_

*Comments:*

Criterion 2. Project Design

Score: \_\_

*Comments:*

Criterion 3. Management Plan

Score: \_\_

*Comments:*

Criterion 4. Personnel

Score: \_\_

*Comments:*

Criterion 5. Evaluation

Score: \_\_

*Comments:*

Criterion 6. Model Project

Score: \_\_\_\_

*Comments:*

Criterion 7. Budget

Score: \_\_\_\_

*Comments:*

### **ADDITIONAL CRITERIA**

Enter score for Criterion 8 *only* if the applicant included a section on “Technical Knowledge” in the project narrative.

Criterion 8. Technical Knowledge

Score: \_\_\_\_

*Comments:*

### **INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPUTING THE FINAL SCORE**

1. Total the scores for Criteria 1-7                      Total = \_\_\_\_\_

2. Criterion 8 score (if applicable)                      \_\_\_\_\_

## **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS**

Use this space to write additional comments or suggestions for the applicant that can help to improve the proposal for future submission, or to carry out project goals in other ways. These comments will be used as feedback to the applicants.

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**REMEMBER TO MAKE 2 COPIES BEFORE SIGNING. (Then sign one only.)**

I have reviewed the application cited above in compliance with the application review procedures. I have provided scores and comments for all applicable criteria.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_